

ANNUAL ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BY

THE REV. JOHN M. BROOKE,

PRESIDENT,

BEFORE THE

FREDERICTON ATHENÆUM,

17th FEBRUARY, 1851.

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ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN:

THE period has again come round when we are called upon to review the proceedings of our Society during the past year; and the duty devolves upon me, as your President, of endeavouring to refresh your recollections of the various subjects that have been brought under our notice since I had the honour of filling this chair.

This is now our fourth anniversary; and the task which falls upon me this day has, on former occasions, been so ably executed by my predecessors in office,—his Honor the Master of the Rolls, the Venerable Archdeacon, and by the Hon. Chief Justice,—that I approach it with no small degree of anxiety, greatly doubting my ability to impart any high degree of interest to this Address.

I beg you to understand, that I enter upon my duty in the spirit of a Recorder, rather than that of a Judge. It shall be more my object to state what has been done, than to pronounce any authoritative decision as to the manner in which it has been done.

Before, however, proceeding to what is more immediately the object of this Address, you will permit me to take a short review of our history from the beginning.

We are indebted, as you are all aware, to our respected Secretary for the first idea of the Association of which we are members.

That something of the kind was exceedingly desirable was my conviction, since the time that I became an inhabitant of this City. I had often wished for some Association that might bring together, at stated intervals, those gentlemen residing in Fredericton and the neighbourhood, who had devoted their attention to literature and science—that we might thus collect, as it were, into one focus, the scattered rays of mental light that had hitherto existed in a separate state. That such there were I never doubted, when I looked to the learned gentlemen who so worthily fill the chairs of that literary Institution, within whose walls we are now assembled, and to the members of the various learned professions who reside near us. I confess, however, when the subject was first broached to me, I had some

doubts of the possibility of combining and keeping together, for any length of time, the materials that were necessary to lead to any important practical result. But these my fears were, in a great measure, overcome, when I witnessed the warm interest that so many able, honourable, and learned gentlemen took in accomplishing the object we had in view. I was satisfied that the reservoir would be supplied when I saw how many streams were ready to flow into it. I remember, many years ago, I sailed up Loch Lomond—that chief of Scottish Lakes. I had previously seen the Leven discharging a very considerable current from the Lake, and yet its depth was undiminished. I enquired of a gentleman on board the Steamer, who seemed well acquainted with the localities, how its waters were supplied. He pointed to the mountains piled up all along its shores, and told me that every one furnished its share. Silver streams could be traced here and there, on the right and on the left, glittering in the sun, all converging towards the Lake; and the mighty Ben himself, from his rugged sides, sent forth a never failing supply. So when this Society was formed, when I saw gentlemen occupying the high places in the Church, on the Bench, at the Bar, and in the practice of the healing art, uniting to accomplish the object we had in view—when I saw that England, Scotland and Ireland had each contributed her proportion of members—that one, if not more, from the lettered Halls of Oxford, had joined with us, and that we could count among our members, if I mistake not, representatives from three, if not all the four, Universities of Scotland, as well as alumni from various other learned Institutions, in the Provinces and elsewhere, my apprehensions with regard to the formation and future success of the Society were almost entirely removed.

And here, I am sure, you will pardon me for a passing allusion to one venerable individual, who not only took a deep interest in the original formation of this Society, but has all along been its most generous benefactor. I allude, as you must be aware, to him who lately occupied the highest place on the Judicial Bench of this Province. It must be in the recollection of those who first met for the purpose of organizing this Association, that his Honor Chief Justice Chipman was one of the number. When we had commenced operations, he seemed to observe our progress with a pleased satisfaction. Amid much bodily weakness, he still continued invariably to honor us with his presence, when in Town during our meetings, and he has shown his regard for our Association by many valuable and tangible proofs. Though he has ceased to hold that responsible office which

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he long sustained with so much credit to himself and satisfaction to the public, I am sure all of you unite with me in the expression of our fervent wishes, that he may yet be spared to enjoy many peaceful days ; and that in the bosom of that privacy to which he has now retired, the evening of his life may be tranquil and serene. We cannot, I fear, hope to see again his venerable form often amongst us, as his public duties no longer call him to this City ; but

"Unus avulsus non deficit alter."

We have still the Chief Justice among us : not as of old, enfeebled in body, though still vigorous in mind, but in the prime of life, as well as of intellectual energy ; and able, as well as willing, as he has shown himself in times past, to take an active part in our proceedings. Long may he occupy that place to which he has so worthily been advanced ; and in the midst of the troubles and sorrows of this transitory life, may he enjoy that support which Heaven alone can bestow ! *

But to return,—I was saying that, when I saw so many able men take an interest in the formation of our Society, my fears respecting its success were removed. I then was disposed to be exceedingly sanguine. My hopes rose high when the depressing influence of my former fears was removed. I anticipated not only the enjoyment of much pleasure, from meeting periodically with literary, scientific and intellectual men, but that we might ultimately, and to some extent, be the means of raising the literary character of the Province, of diffusing useful knowledge, and forming a taste for intellectual pursuits among the youth of our land.

And I am fully satisfied that, had all who at first joined with us in the undertaking, and who expressed much zeal for our success, continued to lend us their aid, we might, in the course of time, have accomplished what we anticipated. But the ardour of some was soon cooled. They "put their hand to the plough" with much alacrity, and it seemed as if they were determined that the whole field should be cultivated. But they soon became weary in the work, began to look back, and finally abandoned it altogether. There may, I doubt not, have been sufficient reasons for their thus withdrawing from us. Other duties, perhaps, of a more important nature, might interfere with their attendance upon our meetings. I desire to use the language of regret, rather than that of reproach. We have no right,

* The family of Chief Justice Carter had recently been visited with a painful domestic bereavement.

and certainly no disposition, to blame, however much we may grieve for the loss of such valuable and respectable associates.

But it is time to proceed to a short analysis of the different Papers that have been read before the Society during the past year. And in the outset, I cannot help expressing my regret that the number is so small; or, to adopt the phraseology of some of my friends now near me, that there are so few cases for me to try. If I thought only of my own ease, I should rather be gratified by this circumstance, as it might tend to lessen my labour, and to facilitate the task devolving upon me as your President. But as a dutiful member of this Society, I am more desirous of seeing it flourish than concerned about any little trouble which my office imposes upon me.

The first paper, after the annual meeting of last year, was read by Mr. Wilkinson, and was entitled "Forest Reminiscences." I believe there are very few in the Province so well qualified as that gentleman to give a detail of adventures in the unpeopled wilderness of woods. Perhaps, indeed, there is not another whose professional engagements have subjected him so often to the necessity of becoming a dweller in the forest wilds; and who, at the same time, possesses an eye so quick to observe, with a hand so able to depict the scenes of rude grandeur, into the midst of which he has been so often thrown. His narrative must have struck you all as distinguished by unaffected simplicity and good taste. He attempted not to interest us by florid description or elaborate detail; but he rivetted our attention and bore us along with him unresistingly, by the simple tale of his toils and sufferings. We followed him, with an interest that went on still increasing, in his wanderings through the trackless forests. We watched him in fancy, while rocked by the breeze on his "tree-observatory," or spreading his tent beside some nameless stream. Our hearts beat high, and our breath was suspended, while we thought of him and his small party of followers, all but perishing, and still holding on their weary way, till, when hope was almost gone, the welcome shout proclaimed that relief was near.

It is strange to think that, in the very land in which we dwell, though the abode of civilized man, and under the protection of British law, there may be scenes as full of peril, and privations to be encountered as terrible as any that Mungo Park or his successors in travel ever met with, even in the African desert.

The noble bard has said,—

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,"

If he had possessed the experience of our respected associate, he

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would have acknowledged that it is a pleasure not unmixed with pain. If, instead of a morning's stroll in the woods, with the smoke of his own chimney still seen by him, rising at no great distance, and knowing that *there* his dinner was being cooked for him, and to which he knew he could sit down at a certain appointed hour—he had spent, not hours or days, but weeks and months, roaming the forest, far from the abodes of men, and sometimes almost fainting with hunger, it would have grievously destroyed the romance with which he delighted to view the trackless wilderness.

There is another of our fellow-citizens,* who has often been employed on services similar to those of Mr. Wilkinson, and who could also have told us of the perils of the desert; and the review of Mr. Wilkinson's paper brings the subject forcibly before my mind. I know nothing in the whole history of travel, whether by flood or field, more painfully interesting than the account which I have heard, and that, too, only at second hand, of the appalling circumstances in which the gentleman I allude to was, on one occasion, placed. What heart but must have been wrung by the tale of the terrible privations which he endured, in the awful solitudes of the remote recesses of the woods—of the gradual failing of his strength, which told him that nature could bear out but for a very little while longer—of the visions of mocking savages that seemed to flit before his fading eye—till at length, when worn out with toil, and hunger, and cold, and deeming his last hour at hand, he hung his handkerchief on a bush, with no other hope for this world but that it might attract the eye of some wanderer in the wilderness, and lead him to the spot where his bones reposed, that his family might thus be made aware of his melancholy end,—and then laid him down to die! It was a happy—I might almost say a heaven-inspired—thought, for it was the means of his salvation. The deliverer approached—who shall say accidentally? His eye was attracted by the signal that had been hung out, and the helpless wanderer was borne to a place of safety.

I hope I may be pardoned for this passing allusion to the sufferings of an individual, who, although not one of our number, is well known to us all, and the narrative of whose trials cannot fail to have deeply affected every one who has listened to it. They were brought strongly before my mind by Mr. Wilkinson's unadorned, but not the less touching, account of the days of toil and suffering which he and his companions underwent in similar circumstances, though,

* John Grant, Esquire, of the Crown Land Office.

happily, they were not reduced to such terrible extremities as the gentleman to whom I have referred.

I should but ill discharge the duty which belongs to me were I, in speaking of the *verbal* account of Mr. Wilkinson's labours, to omit all reference to a most beautiful and elaborate record of a different kind, which is to be found in the map of the different portions of the Province explored by him, and which he has so generously deposited in the archives of this Society. The time, I venture to predict, will come when it will be of great value.

Our next meeting was in June, when a very able and interesting paper was read by the Hon. the Solicitor-General, on "British Connexion." The object of the learned Essayist was to view the subject, not so much as a political question, as in its moral aspects; or, in other words, to enquire what influence union with Great Britain is calculated to produce on the moral condition of this and other Colonies. The subject is one that required nice treatment to guard against a violation of a fundamental rule of our Society, which forbids political discussions at our meetings; but it was universally allowed that our able associate, with great judgment, avoided the difficulty. There is no doubt whatever that the moral results of a Colony's union with Great Britain may be viewed quite distinct from its political bearings. Whether or not a son is entitled to free himself from the authority of a parent, and if he is, at what period, or in what circumstances, it may be legally done, are questions for the legislator to determine. Whether or not the moral condition of this son would be affected by remaining a member of his father's family, an inmate of his father's house, under the observation of the parental eye, and the influence of parental instruction, is a question for the moralist to decide.

The same questions, I conceive, are applicable to Colonies, and to their union with, or separation from, the Mother Country. Did we enter into the enquiry,—How, and to what extent, a separation from Great Britain would affect the economical state of the Province?—how, and to what extent, it would tell upon its commerce, its agriculture, its mines, and its fisheries?—we should immediately be treading upon the debateable ground of politics; and that, by the laws of our Society, is wisely prohibited. But by limiting our investigations to the effect of British connexion upon the manners, the literature, the mode of thinking, and all those phenomena that go to make up the moral condition of a people, we keep upon ground where we may expatiate freely, and over every inch of which it is permitted us to tread with unfaltering step.

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We do not then undertake to pronounce with confidence that the connexion of a Colony with Great Britain will make its inhabitants more prosperous merchants, more skilful farmers, or that it will tend to the diffusion of wealth and prosperity among all classes. I have my opinion upon the subject, and at a fitting time, I should not hesitate to express it. This, however, is not the time that calls for such an avowal. But at the present time we do not hesitate to maintain, and I am pleased that there is no restriction to prevent my so doing, that our being a part of that Mighty Nation, which has carried the light of Civilization and the consolations of Religion to the remotest corners of the globe, cannot fail to have a powerful influence upon the mind and manners. To me there is something ennobling in the thought, that we are part and parcel of that nation over which Alfred and Bruce once reigned—that the literature of that country is our own, and not that of a foreign land—that the language in which Shakespeare, and Milton, and Scott, and Campbell wrote is our mother tongue—that Pitt, and Burke, and Newton, and Watt, and Nelson, and Wellington are our fellow-countrymen.

Yes, it is at once our boast and our privilege that we constitute a part of the British Empire. Many of our fellow-citizens, and not a few of ourselves, first saw the light in the British Islands. The rich plains of England were the birthplace of some; the pastoral hills and teeming valleys of Caledonia have produced others; and our sister Island has also sent us some of the best and bravest of her sons.—We meet on these shores as brethren. We cherish the same love for the homes of our childhood, the land where the ashes of our fathers repose. We form a triple band—a “threefold cord”—which, we trust in God, “shall never be broken.” We love our country. We love the British Constitution. We have loved it always, and now we love it more than ever. The hurricane of revolution has passed over Europe, and when we look at the shores which it has visited in its desolating course, we behold them strewn with many a wreck. Thrones and dynasties have been swept away; and though the fury of the storm has been, in some measure, stayed, the waves are yet heaving under the influence of the recent tempest.

What a proud position has Britain occupied amid these convulsions! She has felt the influence of the gale, but she has met it unmoved, as her rocky shores by the assailing waves. Is there no moral influence in these reflections? Are they not calculated to tell powerfully upon the character of all who write themselves subjects of the British Crown?

It must be within the recollection of the members of this Society that our honourable and learned associate treated his subject with much skill ; that, while he gave forth no uncertain deliverance of his opinion as to the moral advantages of union with Great Britain, he spoke in the calm tone of the contemplative philosopher, and exhibited none of the fiery spirit of the politician.

I should not be doing justice either to my own feelings, or to the paper of our able associate, were I to withhold my tribute of approbation from the style in which that paper was composed. And I know that, in saying this, I am only expressing what is the opinion of you all. His thoughts, so just and so well fitted to command our sympathy, were brought before us in a vehicle that was worthy of them ; which, like the rich setting of the precious diamond, at once gave and received lustre.

After the Summer recess, the Society met, as usual, in September, when a paper was read by Professor Jack, on the Telescope, which I regret that my absence from the Province prevented, me from hearing. I am, therefore, under the necessity of passing it over without remark, but shall have occasion afterwards to advert to the subject, which was brought before us by the same gentleman at a subsequent meeting.

At the meeting in October, the Society enjoyed the benefit of an able and instructive Lecture, by Dr. Robb, on "Sensation and the Organs of Sense."

In the investigation of this subject, our talented Secretary occupied a field that was peculiarly his own. He gave us a minute description of the various organs of sense by which we become acquainted with the material world ; and he marked out those qualities in matter, the knowledge of which they are severally fitted to convey to us. The organ of touch, which may be said to be diffused over the whole body, but is more particularly placed in the tips of the fingers, makes us acquainted, among other things, with external form and the varieties of surface. The organ of taste, which resides in the tongue and palate, enables us to distinguish between those substances that are nutritious and those which are noxious when received into the digestive system. The organ of smell, which is in the nostrils and olfactory nerves, makes known to us the odorous qualities of bodies. The organ of hearing, which is double, and partly external, and partly seated in the cavity of the head, enables us to distinguish sounds. The organ of sight, also double, conveys to us the idea of light and colour, and their effects upon material

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substances. I regret that I cannot follow the learned Doctor through the rapid analysis that he gave of those various corporeal organs, by which we are fitted for holding converse with the external world. His description of the eye and the ear was to me peculiarly interesting; and of both those organs, I have now, I think, a fuller and more accurate knowledge than I possessed before.

One important remark must have struck you—that the field of operation of each organ is perfectly distinct, so that no one of them can discharge the function of another. The finest eye can convey no notion of sounds, nor the most acute ear of colours. It is said, indeed, that there are blind persons, who can distinguish colours by the touch, though I doubt exceedingly the truth of the statement. Or if we do admit it to some extent, I am convinced that it is not colour, properly speaking, that is perceived. All that we are entitled to affirm is, that there are certain very nice distinctions between the feeling of one surface and that of another, with which the blind person is taught to associate the idea of different colours: so that, after all, it is not colour that is perceived by the touch, but merely a *particular state of the surface* of the body to which the fingers are applied. It might just as well be affirmed that we can discriminate between different metals by the ear. Experience teaches us that different metals, when struck, give forth different sounds; that one kind of sound is produced by iron, another by silver, and another still by that composition of which bells are formed. Still it is only sounds that are perceived, and the bodies from which they proceed are connected with them solely by association.

The nice adaptation of our organs of sense to the various qualities of bodies in the external world, is one of the most convincing proofs that they are the work of an All-wise Creator. They are beautifully adjusted to the functions which they are intended to perform. It is conceivable that they might all have possessed powers of a different, and, in some respects, of a higher kind; but any different adjustment, instead of being beneficial, would have been attended with very great disadvantage. The eye might have had the power of the telescope; but then we should have been entirely blind to objects that are near. Or it might have possessed the power of a microscope; but then again it would have been impossible to behold objects at a distance. The ear might have been fitted to hear a whisper, as far as the eye can discover a figure; but then it would have been deafened by a perfect crash of sounds, from an infinite variety of sources around us. All, however, is in beautiful harmony.

There is no excess of power, and no deficiency. And the exclamation of the Psalmist must be the devout utterance of every reflecting mind,—“O Lord! how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast Thou made them all!”

The old schoolmen, who were always fond of indulging in unfounded hypotheses, imagined that there might be, what they called, occult qualities, which, if we possessed additional senses, we might have been able to discover. We have no right to assert positively, that this is impossible. If a race of beings existed, destitute of the organs of sight, they would maintain that there was no such thing as colour; or if destitute of the organs of hearing, they would deny the existence of sound. Indeed, the former class could have no conception of colour, nor the latter of sound. *We* possess these senses, and therefore, have a knowledge of those qualities which they are fitted to convey to us. And who can tell but that there may be creatures, of a higher, or at least a different organization, who are capable of perceiving qualities of which we have no more idea, than the blind man has of colour, or the deaf man of sound? This enquiry, however, can lead to no practical result, and therefore we do not pursue it.

In this Lecture Dr. Robb confined his attention entirely to what may be called the *mechanism* of sensation. He gave us the anatomy and physiology of the organs, but he attempted not to explain the mental phenomena in which sensation consists. It is sufficiently obvious that the eye, the ear and the other senses are but organs; and that sensation is not a mere organic affection, but a state of the mind. What then is the unseen link that connects mind with matter? Where does the function of the former begin, and that of the latter terminate? We trace the vibrations to the brain; but still the brain is not the mind. What then is the process by which a vibration of the nerves becomes a thought in the understanding? Now here philosophy is at fault. She can dissect every organ, and lay bare every nerve, and show the connexion of them all with the brain; but the mind eludes her research. All that she can do is, to record the phenomena that she observes. She can say, such are the facts, but as to how they are so, she is compelled to acknowledge her ignorance.

At our next meeting, which took place in December, we were indebted to the same gentleman for a very interesting Lecture on “Electro-Magnetism,” illustrated by many peculiarly beautiful experiments. I was most anxious to hear this subject treated in a scientific manner, and, strangely enough, had resolved to ask Dr. Robb to

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take it up. It was, therefore, with no small degree of surprise and pleasure, that, when the circular notice of our meeting arrived, I found that he had fixed on the very subject about which I was so desirous to learn the result of the latest investigations. It belongs to a department of Natural Philosophy, in which so many advances have recently been made, that one requires to be constantly on the alert, or he will soon fall behind the age. And, I confess, this was, in some measure, the case with myself. It is long since something was known of Electricity; and it is also long since the shepherd observed that the magnet attracted the iron of his crook. It is but recently, however, that our knowledge of these subjects could be said to possess the fullness and accuracy of science. Franklin was thought to have made a marvellous discovery, when he established the identity of the lightning from the thunder cloud and the spark emitted by glass excited by friction. Could he have realised his own whimsical proposal of being preserved in a butt of wine, and been resuscitated at the present day, he would witness enough to fill him with astonishment. The progress of that great country, in the establishment of whose independence he took so active a part, wonderful as it has doubtless been, would not, I think, be to him the most surprising change. The advances of science since his day, and the application of the powers which it has succeeded in developing to the purposes of life, would, I am persuaded, excite in his mind the greatest amazement. He would observe Lakes and Rivers that were scarcely, and some of them not at all, known to his co-temporaries, traversed by the gigantic Steamer, with its crowds of travellers, bearing into the remote wilderness all the luxuries and conveniences of civilized life; and even the Atlantic itself crossed once a week by the Ocean Steamers. He would observe, too, the rail-car, impelled by the same powerful agent—steam—rushing along like a whirlwind, making what was formerly the toilsome journey of weeks, a pleasure excursion of a few hours. And, perhaps, most wonderful of all, he would witness the application of Electricity to facilitate the intercourse of man with man, from one extremity of this great Continent to the other. Little did he dream of these astonishing results when he sent up the kite into the thunder-cloud, and received a shock from the key to which the string was attached, and which he held in his hand.

There are three powers existing in nature, different in some respects, at one time regarded as totally distinct, but among which it is now sufficiently ascertained that there is a very close connexion; if they are not absolutely identical. I speak, as you must be aware, of

Electricity, Galvanism and Magnetism. It had been observed that, during a thunder storm, the magnetic needle was powerfully affected, so that, in some cases, the poles were reversed. It is also known that the Galvanic battery is, in its effects, very similar to the old Electrical machine. Our learned lecturer, by a series of experiments, as successful as they were beautiful and striking, showed how a metallic bar charged with electricity exhibited the polarity of the magnet; and on the other hand, from the magnet he elicited the electric spark. Such facts, if they do not establish the entire identity of these powers, prove beyond a doubt that there is much among them of a common nature.

The combination of these powers in the Electric Telegraph, is one of the most beautiful applications of scientific principles to the purposes of society that the world has ever witnessed. The whole of this wonderful apparatus depends upon this one principle—that a piece of iron becomes instantaneously magnetized by electricity, and that this effect is produced at an indefinite distance, when it is connected by a wire with the electrical apparatus. Upon this is founded that marvellous mechanism that realizes the idea of the poet, in a much higher sense than he ever imagined. It can literally “waft a thought from Indus to the Pole,” and that with the speed of lightning itself. To what extent the establishment of electric telegraphs may ultimately be carried, it is impossible to anticipate. The scheme is only in its infancy; and yet it is stretching its lines over islands and continents, and even across the sea itself. I think it is just about twenty years since I personally witnessed that splendid train of carriages, that moved off in grand procession, at the opening of the Liverpool and Manchester Railway—the first of any extent in Britain. And now the whole country is intersected by them in every direction. Electric Telegraphs are of still more recent introduction; and it is impossible to anticipate the extraordinary revolution they may effect in the intercourse of man with man. I can now send a message to my friend in St. John, in Halifax, in New-York, or even in New Orleans, and receive an answer from the most distant, I believe, within an hour. The wonders of old romance have ceased to be fabulous. They are surpassed by the realities that are daily taking place before our eyes.

Before leaving this subject, I must take the opportunity of expressing my own sense of the many obligations under which the Society has been laid to our most active and efficient Secretary. But for his efforts, we should repeatedly have been at a loss to provide the regu-

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lar periodical supply of mental entertainment at our meetings. But when in a strait, we always knew where to apply, and he has never failed us. Grudging no labour and shunning no exertion, ready always to come to the rescue when, at any time, our resources seemed about to fail, he has been mainly instrumental in keeping alive that Society which he was the principal agent in first calling into existence. I say this in a spirit very far from that of unmeaning adulation. That would be not more distasteful for me to pay than for him to receive. Justice, however, demands this acknowledgment. And I trust we shall long enjoy the benefit of those labours on which we have so often had occasion to make a demand, and which, if I may measure the opinion of others by my own, I can assure him we have felt to be at once pleasant and profitable.

Nor ought I to omit a similar acknowledgment of our obligations to his learned colleague—Professor Jack. He also has furnished far more than an average share of papers for our instruction. I can scarcely bring myself to regret that we have required to throw so much of the burden upon him and the gentleman of whom I spoke last, as it has been the means of procuring for the Society much valuable information, communicated, too, in the most pleasing manner. The weight has been at once so well and so gracefully borne, that I for one have no desire to see them relieved from it.

At our meeting in January, two scientific gentlemen combined their labours for our benefit—Professor Jack and Dr. Toldervy. Their subjects were closely connected, but yet apart, both of them describing the construction of the Telescope, and explaining the scientific principles on which its power depends; yet each occupied different ground, and pursued a different method. The one reminded me of the Architect, who describes the various styles of architecture, the strength of materials, and shews how they may be best combined to form a regular and serviceable fabric. The other was like the Master Builder, who should bring forth his stone, and lime, and iron, and timber, and build a house before our eyes. Professor Jack told us how a Telescope was made, and what were its properties. Dr. Toldervy showed us how to make it. He exhibited a seven-inch metallic speculum, cast, ground, and polished by himself; and likewise a casting, grinding, and polishing apparatus, designed and made after the plan of Lord Rosse, whereby the required form and perfect polish of specula can be secured in a short time, as compared with the older methods of effecting these objects. Dr. Toldervy likewise entered upon the comparative merits of the reflecting and re-

fracting Telescopes, giving the preference, in some points, to the former.

Professor Jack gave some interesting information regarding the manufacture of Achromatic Telescopes, and advocated the claims of the refracting instruments for general purposes. He likewise directed attention to the fine refractor, lately procured for the College Observatory, and kindly invited the members to visit and examine the same, as often as they thought proper.

There was a part of Professor Jack's Lecture on that occasion, which, though it might be considered a digression, was to me the most interesting of the whole—that in which he explained the modern doctrine respecting the Stellar Nebulæ. If it be not stepping aside from the path which I ought, at present, to pursue, I would venture to express a hope that our learned associate would take up the subject at another time, and illustrate it in more ample detail.

There is one portion of our labours, which, although not belonging to our ordinary business, yet calls for some remarks. I refer to the "New-Brunswick Almanac," drawn up under the superintendence of the Society, which has now made its third appearance before the public.

A puerile attempt has been made to make merry at the notion of a Society of sage Philosophers and grave Divines, united for the acquirement of knowledge and for mutual improvement, having no other evidence of their learned labours to produce than an Almanac.

The feeble shafts of this ridicule, however, fall quite harmless. They touch us not, much less do they inflict any wound. Any immediate or premature appearance, on our part, in the capacity of public instructors, through the medium of the press, was never contemplated, and could not be expected. The time *may* come when some of those papers that have had the stamp of approbation affixed to them by the Society may be given to the public; but we claim the privilege of judging as to the time when, and the circumstances in which, such a measure may be expedient.

Meanwhile, we are confident that those who have compared the "New-Brunswick Almanac" with any that were previously issued in this Province, will readily acknowledge that the labours of those gentlemen on whom devolved the task of preparing it, have not been altogether useless. The meagreness of all previous attempts of the kind, their extreme inaccuracy, the long-exploded follies of astrology that disfigured them, the shrewd intimations that we might expect *frost and snow in January, rain in April, and warm weather in July,* were, to say the least, useless, and, in some respects, mischievous.

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But in the Almanac published under the auspices of this Society, the calculations have been made with the most scrupulous exactness; all *guesses* respecting the weather have been excluded as utterly worthless; and a mass of information has been furnished on a great variety of subjects, among which I may mention Astronomy, History, Statistics and Agriculture. While our Society has no pecuniary interest in this undertaking, they feel anxious for its success; and I am gratified to know that the Almanac is gradually winning its way into public favour. Each successive year has witnessed an increased demand for it; and I am satisfied that it only requires it to be known to cause it to supersede all others, and thus to afford an adequate remuneration to its spirited Publishers.

I have now endeavoured briefly, and I fear very imperfectly, to go over the various subjects that have occupied the attention of the Society during the past year. They have not been so numerous as on some former occasions, but yet they embrace a very wide field of investigation. I am sure that if we have not derived instruction, as well as delight, from the labours of our Essayists and Lecturers, it must have been our own fault. We have all had an opportunity of learning something new, and of reviving our recollections of much that was old. And even apart from the information we are acquiring, the very fact of meeting once a month, with gentlemen of learning and intelligence, independent of the avowed object for which we assemble, is, I conceive, a sufficient reason for upholding this Society. Whether or not it may continue to hold on in the course which it has hitherto, upon the whole, successfully pursued, the mutability of all human affairs makes it impossible for me to anticipate with certainty. Had I the power to give efficacy to my fiat, I should say—"Esto perpetua." But should it fall to pieces, as many other Associations of higher pretensions have done, I believe I may say, without fear of contradiction, that we shall all remember our intercourse here with unmixed satisfaction. Not one single cloud has ever appeared to mar the pleasure of our meetings. Whatever may happen, I believe we shall all look back upon them, as so many green spots on which the memory will delight to rest, as sources of happiness, both at the time and when they have past away. And should our union in this Society be broken up, I beg to express my earnest hope—that it may lead to a union of a more lasting nature—that the connexions we have formed here may continue through life, a source at once of pride and pleasure.

I regret that the suggestion of my distinguished Predecessor in this chair, in regard to regularity of attendance, has not been more generally followed up by a practical proof of our conviction of its propriety. I would beg leave, with all deference, to renew the admonition. Let all of us lay it down as a rule, from which there shall be no departure, that, unless in the case of necessary absence from home, or other avocations of an indispensable nature, or of ill health, we shall never allow our places to be vacant at this table—at the meetings of this Society. It is most unfair to a gentleman who, probably with much care and labour, prepares a paper for our information, not to put ourselves to the trouble to come and hear it. And it is exceedingly discouraging to those who do attend, that after submitting to the exertion of a tiresome walk, and that, too, possibly in a cold and stormy evening, they should not be able to muster a sufficient number to allow of our proceeding to business. Our own fireside, and the quiet avocations of our home, may have doubtless their attractions, and in many cases it may require a considerable effort of self-denial to withdraw ourselves from them, and face the wintry blast. But I can say for myself that, whatever effort it may at first have cost, I have never, at any time, regretted having braved the elements to be here in my place. Nor have I ever, on any occasion, when our number was sufficient to constitute a meeting, had reason to say, I had come in vain.

Gentlemen, my reign is now near its close, and I wish to avail myself of my privilege while it lasts. It is not likely I shall soon have an opportunity to lecture you again, and I beg you to take this in good part. It is my interest in the success of the Society that induces me to speak so plainly. If *we* fall away like others, we may expect that, as a body, we shall soon sink into insignificance and disappear—and the "FREDERICTON ATHENÆUM" will only be remembered as one of the things that *have been*, and are passed away.

But though I have forewarned you of what will, in certain circumstances, be the necessary result, I do not think that at present we have any ground for such apprehensions. A goodly number have remained steadfast in their adherence to us, through every variety of fortune. These, I trust, have adopted for their watchword—"Nunquam desperandum est de republica nostra." And while some have been deserting, I am much gratified that we have lately gained an accession to our numbers. Two new members have been recently elected; one of whom, I am happy to see, has, this evening, taken his place at our table, for the first time; and from both I anticipate

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much valuable service. I trust, in particular, that the acquisition of that Reverend and learned gentleman, who has so long presided over, and directed the studies, of the youth attending this College, will mark the commencement of a new era in our history.

Our vessel has, for a time, been in shallow waters, baffled by contrary winds, and forsaken by some who should have helped to navigate her. We are now getting her again into deep water, and favourable breezes are swelling her sails; fresh and able hands have joined us; and now she is again fairly under way. With three hearty cheers, then, let us hold on our course; and I doubt not but that, with the zealous co-operation of all on board, we shall make both a pleasant and a prosperous voyage.